

XX.—*Further Notes on rare Palæartic Birds' Eggs.*

By H. E. DRESSER, F.Z.S., M.B.O.U., &c.

(Plate X.)

IN continuation of former papers on this subject published in 'The Ibis,' I beg leave to offer further notes on some rare and unfigured eggs of birds of the Eastern Palæartic area with illustrations.

(1) RHOPHILUS ALBISUPERCILIARIS. White-browed Babbler. (Plate X. fig. 3.)

Rhopophilus albisuperciliaris Dresser, Man. Pal. B. p. 146.

I have never been able to get any information respecting the nidification of this species, but seeing that there was an egg of it in the Stoate collection, recently sold by auction, I secured it and find that it is marked in the handwriting of Mr. D. Scully: "*Suya albosuperciliaris*, Yarkand, 13 June, 1875." On referring to 'Stray Feathers,' iv. p. 147, I find that Mr. Scully stayed the whole of June 1875 at Yarkand, and states that "this species is tolerably common in the plains of Eastern Turkestan, where it is said to be a permanent resident. It has a rather sweet plaintive note, and frequents long grass and bushes growing near rivers and streams. It breeds in May and June." Mr. Scully does not give any particulars of its nesting-habits, but I think that these eggs may be regarded as sufficiently identified.

(2) OTOCORYS ELWESI. Elwes's Shore-Lark. (Plate X. figs. 1, 2.)

Otocorys elwesi Dresser, Man. Pal. B. p. 379.

It is not easy to get properly authenticated eggs of this Shore-Lark, and until I obtained a clutch along with the parent bird from Tibet I did not place representatives of them in my collection, as I could only obtain them from dealers. The two eggs now figured belong to that clutch of which full particulars were given in 'The Ibis' for 1906 (pp. 342, 343), so that I need not repeat them here.



Andre & Sleigh, Ltd.

EGGS OF EASTERN PALÆARCTIC BIRDS

(3) *PODOCES PLESKII*. Persian Ground-Chough. (Plate X. figs. 4, 6.)

Podoces pleskii Dresser, Man. Pal. B. p. 407.

So far as I can ascertain, the only authentic eggs of the present species are those obtained by Mr. N. Zarudny in Persia, which now belong to the Imperial Zoological Museum at St. Petersburg, for, although Mr. Zarudny sent a clutch to me, they were lost on the way and were never received. I am, therefore, indebted to Professor Bianchi, of St. Petersburg, for the loan of the two eggs figured, which were taken by Mr. Zarudny on the 27 April/10 May 1896.

I am much obliged to Mr. Zarudny for the following notes respecting the breeding-habits of the present species, which are, he informs me, a brief abstract of an article by him, published in Russian (Mém. de l'Acad. Imp. des Sciences de St. Pétersbourg, x. no. 1, 1900):—

“*Podoces pleskii* inhabits the dry, lonely plains of Eastern and Central Persia, selecting such places for the purpose of nidification as are more or less densely covered with shrubs or low trees. The nests are placed on small elevations of the ground among various kinds of desert shrubs. In outward appearance, like those of *Podoces panderi*, they resemble the nests of *Bucanetes obsoletus*, though naturally much larger. Of many that I found, only one was placed on a Pistacia-tree and very few on low trees (*Haloxydon*). All the rest were in shrubs from two to three feet from the ground, and in one instance, as stated below, only about six inches from the ground. The birds are especially fond of building in prickly shrubs, where the nests are very difficult to get at, and the same bush is tenanted several years in succession. In one shrub I found three nests placed one above the other, the topmost of which was tenanted, the central one having been occupied the previous year and the bottom one, I suppose, the year before that. As in the case of *Podoces panderi*, the nest has a light roof or dome in which are two apertures, one for access and the other for egress. The nest has two walls, the outer loosely constructed of slight branches and small twigs—so loosely that the inner

nest is easily seen ; the inner wall is closely and compactly built of tamarisk-down, cotton, goat's and sheep's hair, and wool intermixed with vegetable material, while the dome or roof, which is curved in shape, is constructed of the same materials as the outer wall. One nest was in an *Artemisia*-shrub, only about six inches above the ground. This shrub consisted of a short, sound stem with numerous old and fresh branches forming a dense clump. In making their nest the birds had removed some of the upper ends of the central branches and formed a cup-shaped recess, thus rendering the outer nest-wall unnecessary, it being replaced by the branches surrounding the recess. The dome-shaped roof was placed well above the nest, and had only one hole instead of two as is usually the case. The dimensions of the nests were as follows :—

“ Height of nest from the base to the top of the roof 240 to 260 mm. Height from the edge of the nest to the top of the roof 130 to 150 mm. Height of the nest itself 100 to 130 mm., width of the nest at the top 112 to 160 mm., depth of the nest 48 to 70 mm. Diameter of the opening to the nest itself 81 to 110 mm.

“ The full clutch consists of four or five eggs. In one instance I found six, but one was imperfect. At the end of April (old style) in most cases the young were hatched, and when I found eggs they were much incubated.

“ I may add that *Podoces pleskii* is a rare species, and only found in Persia in a few localities far from towns and villages.”

(4) *ÆGIALITIS PLACIDA*. Long-billed Ringed Plover.
(Plate X. fig. 5.)

Ægialitis placida Dresser, Man. Pal. B. p. 739.

The only place from which I have been able to procure the eggs of this Plover is Japan, whence I obtained a clutch of four eggs, taken at Tamagawo, Musashi, on the 24th of May, 1898. It breeds in stony plains on the borders of rivers, and, like *Æ. hiaticola*, makes no nest, but places its eggs on the ground amongst small stones. According to

Père Armand David, it breeds in China on the Tche-kiang and Kiang-si Rivers. The egg figured is one of the above-named clutch.

(5) *TRINGA RUFICOLLIS*. Eastern Little Stint. (Plate X. figs. 7, 8, 9.)

Tringa ruficollis Dresser, Man. Pal. B. p. 771.

The clutch of eggs figured, for the loan of which I am indebted to Professor Bianchi, belongs to the Imperial Zoological Museum of St. Petersburg, and is, I believe, the only authentic clutch known. They were obtained by Dr. Bunge in the Delta of the Lena, North Siberia, and were recorded by him (Bull. Acad. Imp. des Sciences de St. Pétersb. xxix. p. 441) as those of *Tringa minuta*, but Mr. Buturlin, who examined the birds collected by Dr. Bunge, informs me that they were certainly *Tringa ruficollis* and not *T. minuta*. Dr. Bunge stated that this Stint (*Talerchadschi*, Jakutsk) was the only species of *Tringa* which he found breeding on Sagastyr, in the Lena Delta. The birds fly continually backwards and forwards, fluttering like Bats, and uttering an uninterrupted shrill churring note. On June 24th (July 6th) he found a nest containing three eggs, and between July 12th and 16th (24th and 28th) young in down were seen, not only in the delta of the Lena but also in about 70° N. lat. On July 24th (August 5th) the young were nearly able to fly. In the New Siberian Archipelago the first examples of this Stint were observed on June 4th/16th, and on the 8th/20th of that month they were more numerous. On June 18th/30th a nest was found containing fresh eggs; on the 12th and 17th (24th and 29th) of July young in down were seen, and on the 1st/13th of August fully fledged young were met with. About the 15th/27th of July fully fledged young birds were seen on Anadyr, on the 28th of July (9th August) in Mechigmensk Bay, and on the 1st/13th of August in Plover Bay.

The nest is a mere depression in the moss with a lining of dry willow-leaves about an inch thick.

These notes are taken from Mr. Buturlin's 'Limicolæ of the Russian Empire' (ii. pp. 133, 134), in Russian, and have been kindly translated for me by Mr. Buturlin, who adds in his letter that, so far as he can recollect, only one of the two clutches of eggs above referred to, namely, that taken in the delta of the Lena, was brought to St. Petersburg. *Tringa ruficollis*, Mr. Buturlin writes, does not occur west of the Lena, and all the Stints found breeding west of that river, and all the specimens collected by von Middendorff, prove to be referable to *Tringa minuta*.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE X.

Eggs of

- Figs. 1, 2. *Otocorys elwesi*, p. 486.
 „ 3. *Rhopophilus albisuperciliaris*, p. 486.
 „ 4, 6. *Podoces pleskii*, p. 487.
 „ 5. *Ægialitis placida*, p. 488.
 „ 7, 8, 9. *Tringa ruficollis*, p. 489.

XXI.—*Contributions to the Ornithology of Egypt.*

By MICHAEL J. NICOLL, M.B.O.U.

NO. I.—LAKE MENZALEH.

THE following paper is based chiefly on a collection of birds made during a short stay in the vicinity of Lake Menzaleh, at the beginning of January 1908.

I left Cairo on January 4th, accompanied by Capt. J. W. H. Seppings, of the Army Pay Department. By kind permission of the Director of the Coastguard Administration we used the "Rest-House" at Gheit-el-Nassara, which is situated on the edge of Lake Menzaleh about two miles from Damietta.

At this place the cultivation extends almost to the edge of the lake, only a narrow border of marshland intervening. Near the Rest-House, however, there is a strip of sandy ground, and most of our collecting was done on the edge of the cultivated land, for it was there that birds were most numerous. At the time of our visit, however, there were no noticeable changes in the numbers, as the